

Running Head: PERSONAL ACCOUNTABILITY FOR RISK REDUCTION

Creating Personal Accountability at the Line Officer Rank

For Improved Community Risk Reduction

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Leading Community Risk Reduction

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Appendices Not Included. Please visit the Learning Resource Center on the Web at <http://www.lrc.dhs.gov/> to learn how to obtain this report in its entirety through Interlibrary Loan.

Certification Statement

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Abstract

The problem was that personal accountability at the line officer rank on the Sioux City Fire Department had not been developed leading to lower than desired levels of community education, monetary loss, a growing number of emergencies, and a reactive culture. The purpose of this research was to determine how to create and structure an officer development program to increase personal accountability for risk reduction. This was accomplished by researching best practices and employing questionnaires to find out how personal accountability is created, what other departments do for officer development, and by determining what SCFD needs to do to improve personal accountability at the line officer level. The results of the literature review and the descriptive research indicated the problem was cultural and resulted in recommendations that included the creation of a shared vision, a change in expectations, utilizing measurements and assessments, a comprehensive training initiative, empowerment, and support from the staff.

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Introduction

Personal accountability at the line officer rank on the Sioux City Fire Department (SCFD) is a key component of improving community risk reduction. A recent initiative investigating the need to implement an officer development-training program will provide the added benefit of improved risk reduction for the community.

Problem Statement

The problem is that personal accountability for risk reduction at the line officer level of the SCFD has not been developed leading to lower than desired levels of community education, monetary loss in the community, a growing number of emergencies, and the sustainment of a reactive culture.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this research is to determine how to create and structure an officer development program to increase personal accountability for risk reduction.

Research Questions

1. How can personal accountability be created?
2. What do other departments do for officer development?
3. What does SCFD need to do to improve personal accountability for risk reduction at the line officer level?

Research Method

Descriptive research methods were employed including questionnaires for line officers of SCFD.

Background and Significance

A diversity initiative begun in March of 2004 resulted in the formation of a diversity committee on SCFD. Diversity is viewed from the context of having a workplace that promoted respect, dignity, and fairness to all. This committee is tasked with improving the results of a survey administered by an outside consulting company that indicated low levels of morale. The diversity committee decided to receive input from all members of the department in town-hall style meetings, by rank, on two occasions over the last year. The results of these meetings uncovered the need and desire on the part of the membership to investigate, develop, and implement a training program for the purpose of improving interpersonal skills, leadership development, and supervisory skills on the department.

The reason cited for the need to implement training was that this current lack of training has created a culture of low expectations, low levels of personal development in terms of leadership and interpersonal skills, and this has created an environment breeding low levels of personal accountability. Personal accountability was cited as the major reason for several issues pertaining to the diversity survey including motivation and morale, service excellence, interpersonal dynamics, leadership, and supervision. Cited as of key importance to service excellence was the need to improve risk reduction efforts department wide. While personal accountability was cited as a focus issue, it was recognized that it is a systemic problem related to several complaints from the department membership. Officers on the department felt as if the staff officers had taken away their ability to make decisions, had removed their responsibilities as supervisors, and were not using their power to assist the line officers. The diversity committee

formed a sub-committee to carry out the initial research and make recommendations as to the goals and strategy for a successful long-term training program to address these needs for SCFD.

Personal accountability is the result of an understanding of self, leadership, and a willingness to adopt a strong locus of control. High levels of personal accountability come natural to some people and require development in others, but overall tends to be a phenomenon defined largely, over time, by organizational systemic and cultural norms. This development includes a better understanding of systems and processes within the workplace, it includes better understanding of group dynamics and team function, and is strongly linked to emotional intelligence and leadership. Training and a change in expectations will begin the improvement process towards increased personal accountability and risk reduction.

Three articles that point out the need for this development of people skills, including the self-awareness and leadership that will lead to increased personal accountability were written by Ronny J. Coleman, Dr. Robert S. Fleming, and Deputy Chief Robert M. Buhs. In Fire Chief Magazine Coleman (2002) states that the fire service has done a good job of creating a profession by increasing technical education but states that it is time to shift from entry level development and officer development, in terms of supervision, to advanced leadership development at the line officer level and above (p.36). Fleming (2002) believes that the fire service must commit to a “pilgrimage of passion for learning” (p.22). He states that we have focused almost entirely on technical skills development at the cost of two other primary areas of development required to progress as a service. Those two areas are conceptual skills and human skills.

He makes the point that as one progresses through the ranks, technical skills must be taught first, then human skills, and finally conceptual skills as one moves through the ranks. Fleming pontificates that far too often in the fire service individuals are allowed to assume a position as fire officer without the necessary training (p.22). Buhs (1998) in Fire Chief states “The fire service is moving forward, not backward, and future officers need to arm themselves educationally to confront the challenges of tomorrow” (p.58).

Buhs states that the necessary components of training for officers include

- Planning and organizing
- Communication skills
- Training of personnel
- Supervision and management
- Career counseling
- Health and safety of personnel
- Records and reports
- Written and oral communications
- Problem-solving
- Leadership
- Interpersonal relations (p.58)

Problem

In 2005, this researcher, Everett (2005), wrote a paper titled A Study of Leadership as it Relates to Morale and Motivation on the Sioux City Fire Department in which a departmental problem involving morale and motivation was outlined. Through a series of original research initiatives and meetings by both outside consultants and the

researcher, the underlying reasons for low motivation and morale were discovered. At the time, this researcher wrote, “If left unaddressed, or if the change initiative fails, a serious problem involving the future of the department, the city, and most importantly, the citizens of the community will become a reality” (p.7). While this statement pertains to the problem of low levels of morale and motivation and the service consequences, the paper also uncovered the direct link between service excellence, leadership, engagement, and personal accountability. It was also written by Everett (2005), “Notwithstanding other challenges faced by the department, this alone has the potential to change the face of the department for the betterment of all involved” (p.7). By working diligently, SCFD has used the information garnered from these studies to take action and to execute a series of projects that have begun the change process.

Since the diversity research affects this topic, the original surveys are included in Appendix A. Some of the specific problems as expressed by department members through town-hall style meetings and in surveys were:

- Staff officers employing their authority to belittle, threaten, and punish department members.
- Line officers feeling they were micro-managed.
- Line officers felt that staff officers had undermined their authority.
- Discipline was the main form of learning on the department.
- Firefighters feeling that their opinions mattered little if any to staff officers.

Considering the nature of these issues, it is inevitable that a culture nurturing low levels of accountability becomes reality as it has on SCFD. As the meetings progressed and committees met, several key goals were established that centered on creating an

atmosphere that inspired value for the individual, increased learning opportunities, increased responsibility and accountability, along with better leadership and interpersonal skills. The first step was implementing expectations for how people on the department will interact and treat one another. The second step was to provide leadership training so that people on the department have the skills and knowledge necessary to function in a high performance environment that demands values driven accountability.

The culture that has created these low levels of personal accountability is born of outdated, autocratic management styles, organizational structure and systems, tradition, low levels of personal development, and has lead to apathy toward improvement on the department in many areas of importance not the least of which is service delivery. Service delivery includes the department's ability to minimize, and eliminate hazards in the community. This fundamental shift in fire department mission from one of reactive to proactive has been bread into a younger generation of firefighters through new texts and exposure to different thinking in terms of how we serve the public. This shift is supported by the National Fire Academy and has filtered, as a correct theory, to most departments slowly over the last fifty years. We have seen evidence of this in the increase in fire prevention efforts and public education endeavors and a corresponding decrease in the number of fires and fatalities. For reasons of fear, change aversion, and a fundamental lack of understanding, many departments still focus on the reactionary stance of suppression as the primary mission of the fire service.

Without personal accountability at the line officer rank, risk reduction will not be as successful as it can and should be community by community. In Sioux City, this lack

of personal accountability has created many of these issues and allowed for an attitude that breeds “not my job” as a terribly unhealthy and unproductive mantra.

It is only through increased personal accountability that risk reduction efforts will be fully realized. Like high performance in any organization, the fire service must realize that it is the power of the people collectively feeling like stakeholders and partners in a truly important mission working toward a valuable vision that the energy necessary to produce substantial results will flow. This will make Sioux City safer, increase the productivity and service levels provided, save money, reduce emergencies, and create a proactive culture for the future. SCFD and the fire service in general have to be passionate about breaking from tradition and learning from what our history affords us, while utilizing personal accountability, high expectations, and enlightened leadership to achieve a new and higher purpose.

Importance of Problem Personally

As a career and professional fire officer, this problem is one of career defining proportion. As the fire service realizes a shift in its primary mission, we as professionals in this industry must use every resource we have, to the fullest, to achieve the highest levels of success. People are the fire service’s greatest asset. If departments create a culture in which people are allowed to feel like an important member of a team, charged with reduction of risk, held accountable for results, and taught leadership theories that work to promote personal accountability, the expectations of risk reduction as a primary job description will slowly be made a reality in this generation of firefighters and certainly the next.

As a fire professional who aspires to be a chief it is my responsibility to encourage and work everyday utilizing all powers afforded me to ensure that we as a department and service are moving towards personal accountability and the associated risk reduction that will accompany it. My experience as a professor of business and owner of a successful leadership training, coaching, consulting, and assessment company have afforded me the opportunity to know what is necessary to achieve lofty organizational goals. I have a personal duty and responsibility to promote and assist wherever and however possible.

Past, Present, and Future Implications

Past implications of the problem are rooted in the oldest of necessity, tradition, and mission. From the earliest history of the fire service it was the duty of those in service to “come when called and help”. In America, we have farmed and harvested a rich tradition of personal independence that substantiated the idea of minimal state interference. This means that individuals were held accountable for fire safety and risk reduction, in general, on their own. As time, technology, people, communities, and knowledge progressed, society has realized that as people, we own minimum standards of security and safety to one another living in communities as a cost of benefiting from being a part of the conveniences and life-style afforded by those living conditions. Taxes are paid for protection in these communities and ideas of protection have been evolving as improvements in fire and life safety have created general reductions in the number and severity of fire loss. The public began to demand other services be provided.

The fire service adopted and utilized the most common and effective method of management of the time for the job to be performed. This style is para-military in nature

employing a strong chain of command, authoritative leadership, and strict policies guiding all activities. This style of management perpetuated by Fredrick Taylor, known as scientific management, allows for the Theory X mentality to take hold. This theory is characterized by the idea that workers are inherently lazy and lack motivation even given the proper environment. This was effective for the service in a time when its only charge was to respond to emergencies and to give and take orders to that end. The problem with this management style is that its timely effectiveness blinded many to the changes occurring in society. The management style created a culture in which low levels of personal accountability was commonplace.

As departments function today and look forward to the future they struggle with adopting a management style that is reflective of the values and necessary expectations of a new mission. Risk reduction is the forefront of departmental effectiveness and requires personal accountability and leadership at all levels of a department to be most effective. Many departments today are dealing with risk management by trying to fold it into a niche that fits the traditional fire department management style, relegating it to a secondary role until people are trained and empowered to take action at every level.

The future implications of this fundamental shift to risk reduction and the necessary levels of personal accountability that go with it, will take root either slowly as forced, proactively, or as generational differences in learning, expectations, and workplace practices evolve in the fire service. SCFD presently has the ability and opportunity to change in a way that will better fit the service demanded and provided today while allowing for a more satisfying work environment for its employees. This begins by instilling personal accountability for risk reduction at the line officer level of

the department and creating the supporting structure and values such as leadership training and staff support to sustain these changes.

Pertinent Organizational Data

Sioux City is a growing and changing retail / entertainment center and community of 85,000 residents covering an area of 60 square miles. The city is located in a multi-city, tri-state area consisting of Northwest Iowa, Northeast Nebraska, and Southwest South Dakota called Siouxland with a population exceeding 120,000. The city was a packinghouse city and experienced a boom during its early years. This has led to a city having one of the oldest housing stocks in the country and many, very old commercial structures, as found in East-coast industrial cities. The downtown area is the cultural center housing the cities art center, libraries, museum, theaters, event and convention centers, along with entertainment districts. Bordering this area are low income, old stock, housing areas. The city is expanding to the East with shopping centers and housing at a renewed and fast pace.

The department is a tax-supported organization with seven firehouses, three truck or ladder companies, nine engine companies, several specialty rigs, and 114 personnel serving the community. On any given day, 33 career firefighters from the International Association of Professional Firefighters Local Seven are staffing those firehouses and equipment to protect the city from fire, disaster, for rescue, and emergency medical emergencies. Of a ten million dollar budget over 90% of the tax dollars go towards salaries and personnel related benefits. An organizational chart is found in Appendix B.

Run Statistics 1980 – 2005, Shown in five-year increments.

	1980	1985	1990	2000	2005
Area in Square Miles	52.44	52.94	53.03		59.7
Population	82,003	82,095	82,247		85,013
Members	126	118	117	117	114
Total Incidents	2845	3165	4587	5269	5669
Medical Emergencies	1347	2032	3163	3833	4275
Fire Alarms	758	448	412	418	269
Alarm per 1000 Population	34.7	38.53	57.46		66.68
Total Loss	1,589,255	981,559	810,546	1,899,281	1,739,560
Loss per Capita	19.38	11.96	10.1		
Fire Fatalities	14	0	4	0	0

As this chart indicates there is a marked increase in the number of total runs each of the five-year periods shown. This has occurred while the population and square mileage SCFD covers has increased only slightly. The number of firefighters has declined while the numbers of fires has as well. The medical emergencies have increased significantly as have the costs associated with such care. Medical costs continue to climb nationally at a rate that far exceeds inflation. This is an area that SCFD can improve risk reduction. This area will have the biggest economic impact on individual citizens. The fire losses have remained somewhat consistent. Considering inflation, figured conservatively at three percent, shows a large reduction in fire loss. The average number of fire fatalities from 1980 to 1992 was 2.7 per year while there have been no fire fatalities for the first time in SCFD history for the five years from 2000 to 2005.

This chart is a clear example exposing the need for increased personal accountability for risk reduction at the line officer level. With increasing run totals and decreasing numbers of people in the ranks, SCFD will have to depend more on the people they have to keep the fires, the fire losses, and fire fatalities down. A new challenge for SCFD will be a reduction in medical emergencies. The possibility exists that a

partnership be formed between the two hospitals and SCFD to create an awareness campaign for safety and health. Line level officers would be an integral piece of this project.

Relation to USFA Mission

This applied research project applies to the mission of the United States Fire Administration's (USFA), Executive Development (R123) Self-Study Guide (2004) criteria number five which states: "5. To respond appropriately in a timely manner to emerging issues" (p.4). SCFD and the fire service in general are facing new challenges brought on by changing run statistics, budget constraints, and new demands that necessitate the advancement of our leadership efforts and personal accountability at the line officer level in terms of risk reduction. In order to achieve higher levels of organizational performance each individual has to perform at higher levels. This is accomplished by individuals, at the unit level, and is most affected by the supervisor of that unit.

It is imperative that SCFD, at this critical juncture, recognize and move forward toward a high performance work environment. It is through high performance that employees feel like partners in the work environment. High engagement levels are attained through abilities and motivation. Both of these attributes can be directly linked to improved leadership and personal accountability.

The public will benefit from increased personal accountability at the line officer level through increased knowledge of important safety issues, a better prepared fire department to serve them, potential cost savings from reduced injuries, and pride in a hometown organization that is leading the way in a reformed government effort aimed at

achieving high quality results through great people at every level. Maximum taxpayer value will be attained only through these high levels of engagement that personal accountability improvements can offer.

How Research Relates to the Problem

This research identifies the fact that personal accountability at the line officer level will benefit community risk reduction. It shows that community risk reduction is an important part of the department's mission, and that through leadership development higher levels of accountability can be achieved that will assist SCFD in providing better service to the community. The research brings forward several specific recommendations to begin the development process vital to the realization of these high levels of accountability.

The questionnaires that were created and distributed to the line officers of SCFD are an important part of this research project. They identify what, in the eyes of the line officers themselves, are the important issues and topics that they feel they need to develop leadership, self-awareness, and ultimately, higher levels of personal accountability. Perception is reality in these instances of personal choice and decision making towards development. Creating a culture of accountability should begin with having a say in the developmental process and that is what the questionnaire provided.

Approach to Research

A descriptive research method was employed that included a questionnaire for line officers asking for their input on training topics that would assist them in developing as leaders with personal accountability. This original research was combined with a

literature review to obtain best practices of fire departments and businesses for a final recommendation.

Literature Review

Research Question One:

1. How can personal accountability be created?

Chuck Burkell (2004) wrote an article for Fire Chief Magazine in which he explained the importance and evolution of the National Fire Academy's (NFA), four-year Executive Fire Officer Program. Mr. Burkell explains the criticality of the coursework in years one and four. These courses are Executive Development (ED) and Executive Leadership (EL). Burkell states that the primary focus of ED is to explore the fire officer's role in organizational effectiveness and the purpose of EL is to emphasize the importance of personal effectiveness (p.59).

Create Personal Awareness.

The rest of the Burkell article clearly explains how important this program and these topics are to the leadership, and the fire service itself. The undertow of personal accountability in Mr. Burkell's statements is undeniable. By creating awareness in key people within the service, we develop a stronger locus of control in them. Officers graduating from these courses leave with a sense of personal awareness, power, and responsibility to make positive change occur. They understand, not only that they can affect change, but also that they must. In ED, the purpose is not only to understand the organization, but rather, the fire officer's role in the organization and community. In EL, personal effectiveness is the objective that is met by understanding self, others, and the politics of relationships. Personal effectiveness is grounded in personal accountability.

In his book *The Fifth Discipline*, Peter Senge (1990) makes a case for the importance of personal accountability within individuals and in organizations. The title of chapter one is “Give Me a Lever Long Enough and I Can Move the World” (p.3) referring to people knowing they have the power to make a difference when they continually expand their capacity to create the results they desire. Senge uses the term “personal mastery” (p. 12) to refer to an ultimately effective and healthy state of being. He states, “Without personal mastery, people are so steeped in a reactive mindset, someone / something else is creating my problems” (p.12). In defining personal mastery Senge uses the terminology “the enemy is out there” (p.19) to explain the propensity that people carry in their natural mental models to find someone outside of ourselves to blame when things go wrong. He goes on to state: “The human actor is a part of the feedback process, not standing apart from it. This represents a profound shift in awareness” (p.78).

The normal linear view in which humans tend to view the world creates a model in which things going wrong must be associated with blame. Senge states: “People with high levels of personal mastery are more committed. They take more initiative. They have a broader sense of responsibility in their work. They learn faster” (p.143). The word responsibility is a clear and direct knot holding personal accountability and personal effectiveness together as one, for both the individual and the organization. We must learn to conquer the mental models that hold us in a blame state in order to move to higher levels of ownership, engagement, effectiveness, and leadership. The problem with these models is what Senge refers to as “leaps of abstraction” (p.192), in which our minds move so quickly to our models that we are unaware when we are not behaving and thinking from our most powerful conceptual point.

Challenge Tradition.

The question of how we have arrived at this point in which we tend to blame instead of assume responsibility must be explored in order to learn, be aware, and create change. Senge states: “Most people have grown up in an authoritarian environment” (p.282). This has created generations of people with the tendency to look to others for answers. It absolves them of responsibility and predisposes them to cynicism. Fire departments, being para-military and hierarchal clearly sustain these weak mental models and more than likely increase their proliferation. Senge states: “In moving from a traditional authoritarian, hierarchical organization to a locally controlled organization, the single greatest issue is control. Beyond money, beyond fame, what drives most executives of traditional organizations is power, the desire to be in control” (p.290). Not only do people have a natural tendency to shirk responsibility when it feels like blame, but the people running the systems within fire departments today prefer not to give up control. This leads to less personal accountability, learning, and change occurring in the minds of lower level officers and in the actions proliferated daily on departments throughout the country.

The traditional style in which departments are managed are part of the problem, holding control, knowledge, and information at high levels. The other part of the problem is that people have a natural tendency within these organizations to believe that the role of people higher in the organization than themselves is to control and coordinate instead of facilitate and teach. This is the classic, traditional management mindset known as scientific management. It was successful during the time because large numbers of people were coming from the farms to the cities during the industrial

revolution in order to mass produce products for the first time. It was simply a way in which management could control the work and therefore the people. It is ineffective today, not leading to high performance, which requires the use of all assets that an organization possesses.

Improve Leadership.

Michael Toth (1998) states in American Fire Journal that each of the five trumpets symbolizing the fire service badge stand for something that the fire officer must also stand for. Trumpet one and two are interesting for this subject being leadership and management. Leadership being not a position one fills but rather how a person acts in a position and the results you achieve, shows a direct tie from the need to be personally accountable to leadership. The second trumpet, management, shows that control and coordination, or results and execution, are still an important part of what a supervisor does (p.42). As managers, we must utilize the most effective methodologies and practices to achieve our goals and the move ever toward the organizational vision. Under the fifth trumpet Toth states:

The ultimate role of the fire officer is to leave a mark on the system, not just a memory. A good fire officer will leave a legacy of improvements behind him or her. If you are not willing to take the risk of changing the way things are done, your role as a fire officer is unfulfilled. (p.42)

Leadership is a temporary state. One is only a leader when one is performing as a leader, doing the things that leadership requires such as promoting positive change, teaching, moving people towards a desired end, motivating, and developing. Leadership does not exist without personal accountability.

The list of personal attributes assigned to those we deem leaders is long but almost always includes trust or integrity, caring, visionary, change agent, and servant to a cause larger than themselves. They know themselves and others, which has been coined emotional intelligence, and they create self-fulfilling prophecies grounded in a strong locus of control. Ronny J. Colman (2004) states in Fire Chief Magazine “The future of the fire service does not depend on the development of one or two individuals to guide it. It will survive the challenges of the future when leadership exists at every level” (p.39). Also in Fire Chief Magazine John Hohman (2005) explains a situation in Baltimore County found that most people in the fire service can relate. He explains of a time when budgets forced cutbacks forcing the need to have decisions made at lower levels in the organization. During this situation, training was instituted to assist these lower level supervisors in becoming leaders. Hohman states: “Paramilitary structures like the fire service tend to breed a reluctance to making decisions” (p.123). Hohman goes on to describe the need to empower, train and support these officers in order to break the cycle of low levels of personal accountability that plague the traditional fire department and move to these higher levels of lower level leadership so required in efficient and effective organizations both in the fire service and outside (p. 124).

Vision / Empowerment / Recognition.

Ken Blanchard (1998) outlines a three-step plan for creating personal accountability and motivating people to action in his book Gung Ho. The first step is creating a strong sense of having worthwhile work. This should not be difficult in the fire service since most people in this line of work do it for the good it represents. This step requires critical conversations of the kind found to be uncomfortable in most

firehouses. These conversations require discussions about why work is important, why we are here, what we can accomplish and what it means to be firefighters. This is the first step in transformational leadership in which the personal goals of individuals are aligned with those of the organization, creating a powerful culture and synergy.

The second step is placing people in control of achieving the goal. This is not abdicating but rather empowering through a series of developmental steps aimed at creating high levels of competence and commitment in the individual. These high levels of situational development indicate the presence of strong personal accountability as one becomes a leader.

The third step is cheering each other on or providing praise and understanding that we are also personally accountable for recognizing others and ourselves for the work we do. While a simple parable, Blanchard's work is grounded in cutting-edge management theory that holds performance is equal to ability times motivation. Exhaustive studies indicate that these are the true motivators in the workplace today. Not only do we get better results with personal accountability but also we get higher levels of satisfaction in employees. We have realized that these two items, development and motivation, are not mutually exclusive but rather mutually dependant in a successful organization.

Communication / Personal Accountability.

John Miller's (2004) book, QBQ stands for the Question Behind the Question. In his books, he makes the case for personal accountability by thinking differently and by asking different, better questions that lead to better productivity, teams, leadership, and service. Miller states that by not asking personally accountable or responsible questions

we create feelings of powerlessness, a victim mentality, and a culture in which us vs. them thrives (p.20-21). “Them”, are those who we can blame when things do not go right. In his approach, there are no excuses, no blame, only learning. In order to develop better personal accountability we each have to be responsible for every interaction, ask the right questions, avoid procrastination, and work with what is available to us. It is a champion mentality, one that will not be defeated and this is why those with higher locus of control are inevitably more successful.

Many of the chief complaints on SCFD and in organizations that I serve in my consulting practice revolve around communication. In Miller’s (2004) QBQ the question of who is responsible for communication is clear. It is always you. You can ask better questions. You can stop assuming. You can take responsibility for the process and the system and begin to make it better. Miller likens personal accountability to ownership and defines it as “A commitment of the head, heart, and hands to fix the problem and never again affix the blame” (p.60).

Sometimes personal responsibility is shirked by affixing blame to a team or group. In fact, the famous saying, “there is no “I” in team” is the perfect scapegoat statement. In reality, the entire team is full of “I”. Made of individuals, teams require accountability by creating it at the individual level. Miller states: “Leadership more than anything else, is about the way we think. It is a moment to moment disciplining of our thoughts. It’s about practicing personal accountability and choosing to make a positive contribution, no matter what our role or level” (p.93). He goes on to explain that servant leadership is the key to this mindset. That ego has no place in personal accountability, instead it is humility that must rule. Leaders do not create more followers they create

more leaders. With this as true, personally accountable leaders must strive to develop accountability in others by giving them opportunities to be involved, to solve problems, and to support their efforts to achieve success.

Training.

Walter S. Booth (1999) writes that many current pre and post promotional education efforts are falling short of providing the tools and understanding necessary to be a leader. He undertook a survey to find what organizations are doing for educational opportunities and found:

- 36% of departments surveyed required candidates to attend specific training prior to promotion.
- Two-thirds of departments surveyed that did not require this training recommended it.
- 70% of departments reported that training was provided by a combination of outside and inside sources while only 9% provided all training internally.
- 7% of departments offered less than 10 hours of training, one-fifth offered 40 hours. 16% offered two weeks, while 17% offered training lasting multiple months.
- Of the two-thirds that do not require but recommend the training only 13% stated that special consideration in the promotional process was allowed for the training.
- 43% of departments have established minimum training requirements for promotion.

- 78% of departments offered tuition reimbursement.
- Only 19% of departments responded that they offered specific bonus points for education. (p.78-79)

Booth points out that the promotional systems reporting are not supporting the education and or training required in the officer's position for successful leadership leading to increased personal accountability (p.79).

According to a survey entitled Leadership Forecast 2005-2006, released by Bridgeville, PA based workforce management consultancy Development Dimensions International (2005), 65% of leaders selected internally stay in their positions and are successful, but 35% who are not successful fail due to poor people skills or inappropriate personal qualities. The report also shows that while formal leadership training is the most common form of development it alone is not the most effective method. The study shows that a combination of formal or traditional classroom training along with informal or non-classroom based training combined with mentoring tends to be the most effective blend. The study also points out that less than half of the respondents have faith in their current leaders, only 53% are satisfied with the current development opportunities and just 47% felt that they were provided all that they needed to develop.

Personal accountability is created by a change in expectations, in leadership, in thought, communication, and action. It requires challenging our current mental models, expanding our leadership capabilities and service. Creating personal accountability will require the expression of energy and focus to engage behaviors. It requires reflection and one on one conversation about work. It will require vision, freedom to achieve, support, and recognition. Lastly, it will take willpower and guts to except the fact that we are the

cause of our own situations in life and to work towards a better end by actionable learning. In short, it will require a new culture.

Research Question Two:

2. What do other departments do for officer development?

Since personal accountability is linked to healthy and successful organizations and therefore a desired state of being, and since we know that we must learn how to achieve this state as individuals and an organization, learning is the next step. There is no shortage of information on fire department officer and leadership development. In the last twenty years, the fire service in general has undergone a transformation to legitimize itself as a profession. Part of this process has been educationally based. Efforts to formalize the body of knowledge and best practices has led to an increase in the number of departments requiring education standards along with technical standards for promotion. This has created a proliferation of writings on the subject. The key here is to identify those program models, or to create one, in which personal accountability at lower levels is created.

SCFD has no educational requirements for promotion at this time. It has no interpersonal skill development opportunities available to members. The department has no leadership or even supervision training opportunities or requirements. Once the “bugles of knowledge” are pinned to the new lieutenant he / she must take the basic supervisory segments of test preparation and utilize those, and hopefully something positive learned from another officer, to make the transition from firefighter to supervisor. This is about to change. As a result of the diversity study, member input, and

the resulting diversity sub-committee on training, a development program is in the process of being implemented.

Chief Thomas Hawkins (2000) writes that poor organizational and individual efforts can be traced to the failure of a fire chief to mandate training upon promotion (p.68). He states that while we are lucky to have students of the profession that perform at high levels this does not negate our responsibility as a profession to give people the tools to be successful (p.68). In the fire service there has been a long held belief that if you were smart enough to earn the bugles you must be smart enough to lead. This is an argument based on flawed logic. Intelligence or test taking ability does not equate to leadership or the ability to promote, in fact, emotional intelligence and ability to execute or execution intelligence have both been linked closer to ability to lead than IQ. In his article, Chief Hawkins points out requirements for the training:

1. The curriculum cannot be abstract; it needs to be real.
2. All curriculum components must have end objectives that are specific and measurable.
3. Instructors must use innovative instructional techniques, such as case studies, role-playing, group interaction and, of course, class participation. (p.68)

Understanding that modern adult learning practices should be integral design elements it is next important to select the proper topics to set the expectations. Chief Hawkins believes that a four-step program is imperative to successful development. The first step focuses on individual development. This focus is backed by Whetten and Cameron (2005) who state numerous times in their book *Developing Management Skills* that a strong understanding of intrapersonal dynamics is a key first step in developing as

a leader (p.10-11). Chief Hawkins states that individuals need to understand their strengths and weaknesses, and understand the mission and values of the organization (p.70). This self-learning process is facilitated by use of assessments and personal growth development programs.

Phase two involves those skills needed to manage the workforce. Included in these topics are communication skills, time management, team building, leadership styles and process, and conflict management (p.70).

Phase three involves the legal aspects of being a manager, employee evaluations, and discipline. Phase four focuses on specific internal programs the department has in place such as management of emergency situations, customer service, local government, financial management, and finally, expectations (p.70).

Hawkins believes that instructor selection is a key to success. It requires a blend of inside and outside facilitators. At the end of each program participants are required to identify ways in which these skills can and will be applied into everyday situations (p.68).

There are also those who argue that making these programs mandatory hurts the process. Clinton Smoke (1997) states: "Training that helps one get ready for advancement should require some initiative on the part of the employee. In other words, if an individual wants to get promoted, they should have to put some sweat equity into the process" (p.8). Smoke and several other authors also call for the use of the NFPA's Fire Officer level one and level two certifications to be used as promotional criteria as a minimum to ensure that front line supervisory techniques and management essentials are learned.

Robert Flemming (2002) states: “Line officers need the same type of training that’s provided by businesses and other organizations to individuals accepting first-line supervisory positions” (p.51). He outlines the need for programming that includes an understanding of roles and responsibilities while providing the knowledge and opportunity to develop skills in management and leadership. In another article Flemming (2002) states there is a need for technical competence, human skills, and conceptual skills at this level and that without these areas of study, fire officers cannot serve the community as effectively and efficiently as they otherwise would and therefore non-training cannot be a tolerated practice (p.21-22).

In an article by Margery Weinstein (2006) entitled Teaching the Top, in Training Magazine, she highlights the outstanding results of leadership training at three companies who have experienced success with their programs.

IKEA, Advanced Micro Devices (AMD), and Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta all utilize self-paced e-learning that instructs students to complete assignments in the real world such as interview an executive about a particular topic. All companies also offer classroom training that offers a more in-depth view of each of the competencies they believe that great leaders possess. IKEA utilizes The Ken Blanchard Companies Situational Leadership Model as a basis for its training. The three companies also utilize 360-degree assessments with customized feedback and developmental training. All three companies offered advanced leadership training at a later point in the supervisor’s career, usually after the initial skills have been mastered. Two of the three companies stated that they use simulations and role-playing to involve participants in very life-like situations that they would face on a day-to-day basis. Beyond these training opportunities, these

companies offered high level training for a hand-selected group of top performers. At these programs top executives including the CEO were presenters, to reinforce the importance of the subject matter and to encourage learning from and at all levels. All of these successful leadership development companies recognized the development process as an ongoing, nurturing process and dedicated substantial capital for the effort.

Atlanta's Children's Hospital was particularly strong in the area of self-awareness and understanding personality characteristics. Each of these successful programs utilized e-learning, traditional classroom, assessments, action learning, and personal coaching (p.30-33).

If the link between effective leaders in the private sector and the fire service can be made, then a learned look into best practices there will benefit the fire service.

Whetten and Cameron (2005) state that you can be an effective leader without being a manager but not an effective manager without being a leader (p.16). This in mind, they have developed several lists of competencies required not only to develop as a manager but as a leader.

Cameron and Whetten's Skills of Effective Managers:

- | |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Verbal Communication (including listening) 2. Managing time and stress 3. Managing individual decisions 4. Recognizing, defining, and solving problems 5. Motivating and influencing others 6. Delegating 7. Setting goals and articulating a vision |
|---|

8. Self-awareness
9. Team building
10. Managing conflict (p.8)

They go on to state that management skills are first behavioral, not personal attributes or stylistic. Second, they are under the control of the individual. Third, they are developable. Forth they are interrelated and overlapping. Fifth, they are sometimes contradictory and or paradoxical. (p.8)

According to the American Management Association (2005), the following are those managerial skills rated as being most important to organizations:

Preferred Managerial Skill (In ranked order):

Customer focus

Ability to use information to solve problems

Recognizing problems and implementing solutions

Credibility among peers

Ability to transform words into action

Listening and asking questions

Contributing to firm mission and objectives

Working in teams

Identifying opportunities for innovation

Setting the standards for self and subordinates

Coaching and mentoring skills

Time management

Implementing improvements

Setting priorities

According to Anderson Consulting (2000), certain employee skills and leadership attributes are necessary for success:

Employee skill	Leadership attributes
Creativity	Less controlling
Team building	Shares authority
Resilience/flexibility	Culturally attuned
Technical competence	Encourages challenge
Deal with ambiguity	Clear vision
Speed	Comfortable with risk
Emotional intelligence	Creates a motivated business
Communication skills	Manages intellectual diversity
	Entrepreneurial

Whetton and Cameron (2005) state that there is a five step process for the most effective learning:

1. Assess current knowledge and behavior.
2. Learn best practices and why they work.
3. Analyze successful and unsuccessful cases.
4. Practice the competencies and obtain feedback.
5. Apply new skills to the work setting. (p.12)

They also break essential management and leadership skills into three distinct categories of personal, interpersonal, and group. Under personal, they recommend the study of developing self-awareness, managing stress, and solving problems creatively. Under interpersonal they recommend learning how to manage conflict, motivate employees, communicate supportively, and how to gain power and influence. Under the group skill category they recommend learning empowerment and delegation, leading positive change, and building effective teams (p.12).

Jack Gordon (2006), in an article for Training Magazine states that there are three basic choices when a new supervisor or manager is named. One is to throw such people into the water to sink or swim. The second is to walk them through some information about company policies and procedures, adding some general training on basic topics along the way to at least get them going in the right direction. The third choice is to put some serious thought into what an organization wants its first-level managers to know, what it wants them to accomplish, how it wants them to behave, and then to put more serious thought into how to best convey this in a meaningful way through training (p.27). The article points out how much impact these supervisors have on business unit performance, referring to the Gallop Organizations study as revealed in Buckingham and Coffman's (1999) *First Break All of the Rules*, in which it was clearly proven that these unit level managers have a greater impact on the performance of an organization than the organization itself. The article goes on to explain that a training initiative needs to consider how the training will relate to the organization's strategic goals, how it will tie into further, higher level training in the future, and how it can be used to teach these managers to be effective teachers themselves (p.27-29).

In Gordon's (2006) article entitled *Getting Serious about Supervisory Training*, he highlights the efforts of four successful businesses in their efforts to train new supervisors. A couple things that each of these four best-practice organizations have in common is the use of blended learning, mentoring or coaching, the use of assessments, and teaching their supervisors to teach employees. Alltel Corporation utilizes a series of monthly teleconference calls to educate managers along with online training seminars designed to stimulate real-life role-playing and activities. American Century Investments (ACI) uses traditional classroom training taught by senior managers. New supervisors are assigned a mentor and the mentors themselves are assigned a senior staff person to mentor them. Their idea is to miss no opportunity to impart learning from the experiences of others and thereby develop higher and higher levels of awareness and skill with each generation of new employees. At ACI, all learning is expected to be pushed both up and down the pyramid. Learning is built into the corporate culture throughout an employee's career.

Another best-practice learning organization is Randstad North America (RNA). Here new managers are sent to several training seminars. In the first, they are asked to develop a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and treats) analysis for their branch. This is just an example of a training program that focuses on utilizing all of the application-based learning. What is learned is expected to be applied. Managers are sent to a five-day class entitled *Managing the Randstad Way* that focuses on coaching, performance management, and other people skills. Again, managers are required to bring actual employee cases with them to work on during the training. This traditional training

is supported by a web site for all employees with several developmental tools to reinforce key points.

Finally, Gordon highlights Wyeth Pharmaceuticals. Management training is started prior to a person being placed in a management position. As a part of career planning, if an employee wishes to pursue a management level position they are directed to a program called StepUP. StepUP is a program that combines assessments and self-paced on-line training. All of the management training at Wyeth is competency based. People actually promoted are then sent to LeadStart, which combines online learning with reading and actionable assignments, and traditional classroom training. LeadStart is a six-month program that once completed, may lead top candidates to Impact, a higher level leadership training program that combines all of the previously mentioned aspects of learning plus a 360 degree assessment with customized training based on the results of the assessment for each participant. Once Impact is completed those who have excelled are then eligible for even more advanced, elective training courses for which their bosses must nominate them (p.27-29).

Scott Blanchard (2006), executive director of client services for The Ken Blanchard Companies, highlights four imperatives for building better leaders in February, 2006 Training Magazine.

- Top management buy-in.
- The program is treated as a process and not an event.
- Leadership development must generate tangible value for the company.
- Strategic integration. (p.31)

Mangers with high-level interpersonal skills outperform those without by 40% according to David Maister (2001, p.218-221). This being the case, the fire service must move to incorporate best and most up-to-date learning practices and topics utilized not only within the fire service but from the outside as well. There is no shortage of fire-service leadership development programming and suggestions. It is up to SCFD to determine the combination of skills that will bring about those traits necessary to create leadership, self-awareness, and ultimately personal accountability at lower levels and then a commitment to follow up with cultural support and long-term change.

Research Question Three:

3. What does SCFD need to do to improve personal accountability for risk reduction at the line officer level?

One of the benefits to the community and the department of increasing personal accountability and leadership at the line officer level is increased risk reduction. SCFD utilizes a program of fire-company based, annual fire inspections at all commercial occupancies in the city. This means that every year, every business is in contact with the fire department and one of its officers at a minimum. Increased personal accountability even at this limited contact of once per year can increase safety of employees, owners, patrons, and the financial stability of the organization and the jobs it provides. With increased personal accountability, instead of a quick fire inspection to meet requirements, an officer may spend time discussing the operations of the company, talking fire safety to owners and employees, and offer other appropriate programs within the department to increase safety. Besides the increase in safety, the department will benefit by better

public relations and support necessary to accomplish our goals of reducing risk throughout the community.

You get what you measure is an old statistics saying that tends to be true in the business world. SCFD needs to measure the performance of each fire crew during inspections and all times in which they are in a position to reduce risk in the community. The department needs to measure efforts towards that end that are not required and track the long-term implications of the program. Beginning a risk reduction program based on personal accountability begins with training and expectations. It involves empowering individuals to perform and to take action based on the values and goals of the organization. It involves a comprehensive effort of education, information, and support.

Brigadier General Huba Wass de Czece (2000) explains that there are four primary functions of effective leadership. The first is to provide and instill purpose. In this case that means being proactive about risk reduction. No longer are fire departments the reactive force that sits and waits for emergencies, instead they are in the community making it a safer place everyday. This vision of a safer community must be what SCFD utilizes to instill purpose and worth in employees and must be supported from the very top of the organization all the way to the newest probationary firefighters. This vision must be a clear picture of expectations and a desired state that is constantly reinforced and clarified (p.28-29).

Second, the General states that leaders provide direction. Clear vision in hand and mind the leader must make available the tools, clarify by articulating the objectives necessary to live the vision, and create actionable next steps consistent with successful practice. The General then makes the case for motivating people. Leaders must know

their individual crewmembers, as motivation is an individual, inherently personal subject. Leaders must know how to create commitment and competence in those around them for it is the job of a leader to develop, motivate and execute. The General states that the final task of a leader is to sustain effectiveness (p.30-31). Character is the ability to carry through on a plan once the excitement of the plan has worn off.

Human nature seeks to avoid change. Even positive change requires effort and a move from one's comfort zone that is eventually questioned deep in the mind of those involved. Willpower and a certain brand of stubborn relentlessness, balanced with openness and humility, must be a strong part of the leaders skill set. A daily commitment to the values, purpose, vision, and goals of the organization will come from these strong leaders.

Personal accountability fits into these skill sets naturally and as a requirement for success. If the individuals charged with creating a safer community do not feel it is their responsibility to work toward and achieve these goals the program will fail. In his book *Flipping the Switch*, John Miller (2006) identifies several obstacles, called garbage thinking: roadblocks to learning, toward personal accountability:

John Miller's Garbage Thinking: Roadblocks to Learning
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Exception mentality: applies to everyone but me. 2. Expectations: we tend to find what we are looking for. Closed minds kill personal accountability. 3. Entitlement thinking: my length of service means I have made it and deserve...

4. Experience trap: arrogance, over-confidence, under-learning. Prevents personal growth and change. We have never done it that way.
 5. Exclusion: discounting another person because they do not agree with us.
- (p.19-29)

These roadblocks tend to be very strong in an old and tradition proud fire department such as SCFD. Miller outlines the necessary ingredients to combat garbage thinking and to promote personal accountability in organizations:

Miller's Personal Accountability Advantage Principles

1. Learning: creates change.
2. Ownership: solves problems
3. Creativity: succeeding with what we have.
4. Service: doing for others what we do not have to do.
5. Trust building: it is up to me. (p.124-127)

This list of topics is an excellent place to begin the learning transformation necessary for personal accountability to take hold on SCFD. Once expectations are understood a system of measurement and recognition needs to be implemented to anchor the new values to the culture of the organization.

In order to accomplish increased levels of personal accountability for risk reduction at the line officer level there is a required change of mind, heart, and actions.

John Kotter (1996) in his book *Leading Change* outlines the steps necessary for successful change:

1. Establish a sense of urgency.
2. Create a guiding coalition.
3. Develop a vision and strategy.
4. Communicate the change vision.
5. Empowering broad-based action.
6. Generating short-term wins.
7. Consolidating gains and producing more change.
8. Anchoring new approaches in the culture. (p.21)

Buckingham and Coffman (1999) working for the Gallup Organization undertook the largest ever study of what makes for successful organizations. Using 12 questions determined from literally millions of interviews and thousands of questions, they determined that these 12 questions, most accurately could determine the success of an organization. Two key findings were discovered. First, there is a direct link between employee opinion and organizational success. Second, the results were unit based and not company, meaning that individual managers were the single biggest influence on the results of the survey (p.31-32).

The researchers broke the 12 questions into four desirable stages that an employee goes through as they have personal needs met, perform better and develop. At the top or summit of these stages is the “How Can We All Grow” stage (p.43-45). It is at this stage when personal accountability is at its highest. It is also at this stage where performance of managers, units, and organizations are at their highest levels. The two questions

related to this summit of personal development require the stages to be in place prior to achieving high scores in this growth stage. These two questions are both related to progress, learning, and growth and the opportunities afforded the employee in these areas.

Gallop Poll Questions

Base Camp What do I get?

1. I know what is expected of me at work.
2. I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work right.

Camp 1 What do I give?

3. At work I have the opportunity to do what I do best everyday.
4. In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good work.
5. My supervisor, or someone at work seems to care about me as a person.
6. There is someone at work who encourages my development.

Camp 2 Do I belong here?

7. At work, my opinion seems to count.
8. The mission or purpose of my company makes me feel my job is important.
9. My associates or fellow employees are committed to doing quality work.
10. I have a best friend at work.

Summit How can we all grow?

11. In the last six months, someone at work has talked to me about my progress.
12. This last year, I have had opportunities at work to learn and grow. (p. 43-45)

The information provided by the results of this survey showed that leaders must spend time one-on-one with employees working to develop and motivate them while creating a culture in which they have the opportunity to satisfy both personal needs and organizational needs. At the top level or summit of the breakout, we see that personal accountability, leadership, and self-awareness have become the topics of overriding importance. In other words, we have developed to the point of self-motivation, self-mastery, or self-actualization where personal accountability is a hallmark of success.

Similar to the Gallop survey results, Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs shows that people are motivated by needs. As a need is met, it no longer manifests itself as a motivation to the person. Once this need is met, the next level on the hierarchy is sought as motivation. Senge (1990) states that in the United States today and in most organizations the lower three needs including physiological, safety, and belonging needs are met almost universally (p.140).

It is the top two levels of this pyramid that managers and leaders must seek to provide for employees. The forth level, self-esteem can be improved upon by self-awareness and a leader that encourages development and growth, is supportive, praises and recognizes when the employee acts successfully from their strengths. The top level of Maslow's Hierarchy is self-actualization and is that stage when a person is motivated internally. They are comfortable as the person that they have become. They understand themselves and seek to assist others. It is at this ultimate level of personal development that all employees, and leaders should aspire to assist there people in attaining, for it is here that the ultimate level of personal accountability exists.

Joelyn Brandon (2005), writing for *The Journal for Quality and Participation* clearly calls a new people strategy in order to change a culture. This strategy includes understanding that success will only be attained by including people. Ask for opinions and input, assistance in decision-making, and treat people as adults. In order to create a shared values process and operating system necessary for high performance, front-line workers need to learn to take more personal responsibility. To follow that she states that management in the organization then has to demand that accountability, while providing the necessary tools and support, including the training required for both skill development and understanding. She believes that organizations have to eliminate management as the final answer and kill the entitlement culture. Brandon says that treating people fairly means treating them differently and it is necessary to provide them opportunities to solve problems. Caring and servant leadership are the answers she proposes to the question of how organizations create personal accountability (p.28-32).

Bruce G. Hensler (1997) in *Fire station Management Advisor Magazine* believes that personal accountability, leadership, and the skills necessary for success at lower levels will be instilled through formal training and education programs that must be required of all new officers. The program must instill humility, compassion, and respect. The underlying foundation of the system must be grounded in self-awareness and an understanding of others (p.3).

The process of reviewing literature for this applied research project has influenced the recommendations found in that section. It also influenced the original research by uncovering the need for initial input into the development process. Creating personal accountability as a means to an end requires several key processes beyond teaching a

subject. The literature review influenced the degree to which this researcher focused on both training and systemic issues related to the topic. There is no, one simple fix that will be successful in creating a change in the organizational culture. The changes will be fundamental and necessitate entirely new levels of commitment, skills, expectations, and thought.

Procedures

The literature section of this applied research paper clearly outlined other department and organizational best practices in leadership training. The connection between self-awareness, leadership training, and improvement in personal accountability is created. The next step in a process of fully understanding training needs to determine the best way for SCFD to increase personal accountability at the line officer level is to survey the line officers themselves.

A questionnaire was presented to every line officer on duty for three full operational shifts. This included nine line officers at seven different firehouses on three shifts for 28 officers. The questionnaire found in Appendix C offered 32 options for training that the participant could rank. These 32 options were determined and created using input from Whetton and Cameron's (2005) *Developing Management Skills* (p. 18), Gary Yukl's (2002) *Leadership in Organizations* (p. xvii-xvi), and Senge's (1990) *Fifth Discipline* (p. viii). The participants were asked to consider the list and those classes that would most impact their self-understanding and leadership skills for increased personal accountability. A section for other classes and comments was placed at the bottom of the list to capture any input or suggestions for additional classes. The participants were to rank, in order, their top 12 choices for training topics.

The questionnaires were hand delivered to every officer by the researcher. The officer was asked to read the information and complete the questionnaire. The results of the questionnaire were then entered into a spreadsheet to facilitate organizing the resulting top choices of the line officers of SCFD. Both numbers of top 12 selections per topic were measured along with average ranking. The top 12 selections were then compared to there average ranking for a list of those topics ranked 1 through 12 that line officers on SCFD felt would most impact personal accountability by improving leadership and self-awareness.

Limitations of the Questionnaires

- Not all line officers were available during the time that the questionnaire was distributed.
- Participants may not have understood the questionnaire or the choices that were made available.
- There is a possibility that some of the line officers that participated did not take time to answer in a conscientious manner.
- An event may have occurred personally or department-wide, that skewed answers on that particular day.

Definition of Terms

Staff: A group of employees especially in administrative jobs. On SCFD, the staff is the management team including three shift commanders, one training officer, one fire marshal, one administrative assistant chief in charge of hazardous materials and emergency medical services, and one assistant chief in charge of the urban search and rescue team. An organizational chart is shown in Appendix B.

Line: Occupation. The line on SCFD are those individuals not included in management.

All firefighters and front-line supervisors such as lieutenants and captains staffing emergency apparatus during shift work are considered line employees.

Siouxland: Is a tri-state area consisting of Northeast Nebraska, Southeast South Dakota, and Northwest Iowa of which Sioux City is the major economic and population base.

Shifts: Daily period of labor. SCFD works a three-shift rotation. Each shift works 24 hours on from 8 A.M. to 8 A.M. and then has 48 hours off duty. These shifts are denoted as first shift, second shift, and third shift.

Union: Labor group organized for mutual aid. SCFD line employees are members of Local Seven of the International Firefighters Association.

Risk Reduction: The act of removing or decreasing the amount of risk. On SCFD and in the fire service this is the act of preventing emergencies through community education, inspection, and enforcement.

Locus of Control: Locus refers to the origin, so that the origin of one's control speaks to what one believes controls one's life.

Suppression: The act of controlling by extinguishing. Suppression is that part of the fire service that deals primarily in emergency response.

Prevention: The act of stopping an act before it happens. It is that part of the fire service that works to prevent emergencies before they happen, normally through education, inspection, and code enforcement.

Bugles: Bugles in the fire service signify rank. A lieutenant has one bugle, a captain, two, and so on. Bugles are used due to their use as a speaking instrument in the early days of firefighting.

Results

The classes selected from the questionnaire should be viewed as some of the tools that line officers are requesting to become better leaders and more personally accountable. While all of the 32 classes selected assist in developing leaders, self-awareness, and personal accountability, the line officers of SCFD have determined that these areas are of critical importance to their personal growth and necessary to perform at higher levels with more accountability for risk reduction. The courses selected are a diverse mix of intrapersonal, interpersonal, and group dynamics skills. Within the top six classes selected, leadership and communication have implications for all three areas, while Personal Accountability, Creativity / Problem Solving are intrapersonal, Giving and Receiving Feedback is an interpersonal, and Team Building is clearly a group dynamic skill.

Twenty line officers responded to the questionnaire. The results are ranked according to the number of respondents placing that topic in the top 12, the top 6, the top 3, and first. The total of these categories is added to obtain a points total that ranged from a high of 38 points to a low of 1 point. On the spreadsheet, the top ranked six classes are highlighted in red. The classes that ranked from number 7 to number 12 are highlighted in yellow. The classes ranked from number 13 to 18 are highlighted in pale green.

Leadership is the top ranked class with a total of 38 points, 5 number one rankings, and 14 total top 12 rankings. Second place is communication with 32 points, four number one rankings, and 14 top 12 rankings. Team Building is third with 29 points, one number one ranking and 12 top 12 rankings. Fourth place is Personal Accountability with 20 points, zero number one rankings and 10 top 12 rankings. The

fifth most popular choice Giving and Receiving Feedback with 19 points, one number one ranking and 10 top 12 rankings. The sixth course is Creativity and Problem Solving with 18 points, no number one rankings and 13 overall top 12 rankings.

Class Rankings from Responding Line Officers:

1. Leadership
2. Communication
3. Team Building
4. Personal Accountability
5. Giving and Receiving Feedback
6. Creativity and Problem Solving
7. Negativity / Attitude
8. Supervision
9. Customer Service
10. Goals
11. Time Management
12. Leading Change
13. Balance: Work & Personal Life
14. Making Work Fun
15. Mentoring / Coaching
16. Management
17. Conflict Resolution
18. Values / Vision / Purpose

Discussion

Everything has a half-life. The death of scientific management, hierarchal organizations, and one great, charismatic leader for all is upon us. The fire service is in the midst of fundamental changes in service delivery, technology, budget restraints, and new thinking. It is not if the fire service changes, for it must to sustain excellence. It is how well we will integrate our most valuable asset, our people, and their creativity, knowledge, expertise, and energy at lower levels into our organizations that will determine the success or failure of future departmental endeavors. Staff officers must be the example in performing their job, which is to develop, motivate, and execute. They must be servant leaders supporting the efforts of line officers to do the same for their people.

Departments that do not succeed will have a thousand excuses and things to blame. They will be a victim of a lack of organizational accountability. Those that do succeed will make mistakes along the way, learn from them, and move on integrating leadership, self-awareness, and personal accountability into the organization to get the most out of every person for the betterment of the communities they serve. John Miller (2006) teaches us that only through personal accountability can this organizational accountability be created. He tells that ego has no place and that humility must rule for this to begin (p.95). This is another direct inference towards the need to develop enlightened and respectful leadership.

It is obvious from the literature review that a comprehensive training initiative is a required element of any change towards personal accountability at the line officer level. Colman (2004) states in Fire Chief Magazine that “The future of the fire service does not

depend on the development of one or two individuals to guide it. It will survive the challenges of the future when leadership exists at every level” (p.40). Booth (1999) tells us that leadership development efforts are falling short on many departments. He states that this training is a necessary path towards developing leaders at all levels (p.78-79).

The link between self-awareness and leadership has been established. The link between leadership and personal accountability has been established and the link between this accountability and risk reduction is evident. It is from professionals both inside and outside the fire service that these links have been provided. Chief Hawkins (2000) shows the need for leadership at the supervisory level (p.68). Whetton and Cameron (2005) state that one can be an effective leader without being a manager but not an effective manager without being a leader (p.16). Robert Flemming (2002) states that “line officers need the same type of training that’s provided by businesses and other organizations to individuals accepting first-line supervisory positions” (p.51). Those topics and methods were provided for us in an article by Weinstein (2006) where she highlights the best practices of organizations deriving excellent results from their leadership development programs (p.7).

The path to personal accountability and the rewards, in terms of risk reduction, is through self-awareness and leadership. Chuck Burkell (2004) makes the case for personal awareness, as developed in the National Fire Academies Executive Fire Officer Program as an integral element for successful fire chiefs and departments to adopt. In both Executive Development and Executive Leadership, the focus is to utilize this personal awareness to become an effective force as a leader (p.58-64).

This change will need to be supported by upper levels in the organization with vision, learning, and systems to support the change. Ken Blanchard (1998) makes the case for vision as a necessary ingredient to both a motivated workforce and a successful change effort in his book *Gung Ho*. He states that at the heart of this initiative is the ability to communicate the importance of the work, known as worthwhile work. Vision, purpose, values, and goals, translated to daily activities are the instruments that must be employed to achieve success in this area. Blanchard also makes the case for empowerment by professing that people need to be in charge of achieving their goals. This area is directly related to personal accountability. As a profession and more specifically, as a department we must learn how to balance this need for autonomy with the need to control and coordinate activities and learn how to do it effectively. Blanchard then states that support is required in the form of recognition and feedback (p.169).

Other departments have adopted soft-skills training in an effort towards greater professionalism and efficiency. SCFD has the opportunity to begin at ground zero and reap these benefits along with those associated with higher levels of self-awareness, leadership, performance, and personal accountability. David Maister (20001) states that managers rated to have high-level interpersonal skills outperform those rated to be without by forty percent (p.221).

As shown in the background and significance portion of this research there is little doubt that SCFD can ill-afford not to create an environment of personal accountability that currently does not exist among line officers. Risk reduction efforts of the future depend on accountability and motivated employees to carry the safety efforts to even higher levels. Collaborating with the community, being innovative, expending great

energy, and utilizing all organizational assets are requirements for these advances in risk reduction and cost saving measures. SCFD needs to adopt a training process that begins during the probationary period and continues throughout a career. Many different adult learning concepts need to be utilized. Resources need to be expended and top management support is necessary.

The kind of development proposed takes a degree of bravery. This bravery needed is due to the fact that personal assessment, change, and learning, all require one to be open to improvement, new ideas, new habits, and the challenges associated with understanding that personal accountability requires us to know that we do not know or even understand everything. Senge (1990) states that we must strive toward personal mastery (p.140-146). At its heart is feedback and introspection. He pontificates that viewing the current situation in a systemic manner will allow us to understand that while personal initiative towards personal accountability will help, the system itself must be viewed as a player in the current state of behavior on the department. This understanding of our current reality will require having crucial conversations about difficult topics, self-assessment, and learning (p.140-146).

Goldsmith and Morgan (2005) wrote in *Leadership Excellence* that leaders who task themselves with development bring multiple benefits to an organization. They improve themselves, their peers, and those people who work for them. This is accomplished by creating awareness of the topic, setting an example, and being a catalyst for conversation and change (p.6-7). These two authors believe that 360-degree assessments combined with effective feedback and coaching, and developmental opportunities are the key to successful leadership development programs (p.6-7).

Brigadier General Huba Wass de Czece (2000) explained in the literature review the four primary functions of effective leadership (p.28). His functions support the needs outlined to create purpose, provide direction, motivating people, and sustain effectiveness. His views are supported by Buckingham and Coffman (1999) who state that as leaders our job is to move people through the developmental stages and support their higher order needs to find the ultimate performance. They state that this is most effectively done in a one-on one interaction and is most affected by a supervisor at the unit level (p.58-59).

Recommendations

In order to accomplish the creation of higher levels of personal accountability at the line officer level to realize the benefits of increased community risk reduction SCFD must initiate several key initiatives. Fundamental shifts in thinking will occur over time with personal development training and organizational learning. Neither of these is a linear problem / solution. The creation of personal accountability requires a systemic and holistic approach to changes in people, structure, and systems.

In order to recommend solutions to the problem we have to understand that it is rooted in historic, deeply seated psychological models, physiological habits, and mental comfort zones that will take time to diffuse and restructure. Increases in emotional intelligence, systemic issues pertaining to the current culture, and proactive change coupled with deep personal commitment and contribution will be the path of change.

Shared Vision

Step one is the creation of a shared vision. This is not the vision statement that finds itself relegated to wallpaper status in a dusty lobby. It is not one person's idea of what the future holds for the department. In order to find a true vision that inspires and serves, the department will need to provide guidelines including purpose and values and allow crucial conversations to affording the transformation of employee vision and departmental vision to become one. To personally identify with a vision, then work each day to live it and coach it become powerful cultural shifts that create the sustained changes sought in our people.

Expectations

Expectations are key to performance. New expectations need to be held as model for all department members. No learning or personal development can occur in a vacuum or under conditions that preach but do not support change. SCFD staff must be taught the new job of a leader. They must understand that it is only through servant leadership utilizing situational development that an innovative, personally accountable line officer can be created. Staff has power. It must be used for the line officers development and not on the line officer. Mistakes will be made. This must be seen as a positive thing for if no mistakes are being made no one is changing. Egos have no place at any level on the department. Expectations must be created that keep personal accountability at the forefront as a way in which SCFD does business without exception.

Training

Developmental training will have to become as much a part of everyday life as technical training. Opportunities to interact, challenge, and create new awareness will be

foundational to personal development at the higher levels of development. Managers perform at higher levels and attain better results with high levels of soft skills. This is simply a result of better relationships, greater employee commitment, higher levels of motivation, and stronger locus of control. By developing systemic understanding, officers at the line level can diagnose development needs of their team-members to create a continuous cycle of learning and improvement.

Measure Performance

You get what you measure. Performance expectations are determined by what is deemed important. Often times, as is the case with values, vision, and purpose, what is purported as being important is not consistent with the actions and beliefs of an organization. By measuring key factors related to development and accountability, the department shows by action that these are important areas. Current systems of measurement are not performance based. They are instead, just a system to keep a record. There is not a system of or normal distribution of praise and reward for those that excel, or any accountability for poor performance, low levels of personal initiative, and blame. SCFD needs to measure the development of its officers, the development efforts of officers to firefighters, and those activities seen as beneficial to promoting personal accountability in all areas including risk reduction.

Assess / Learn / Change

Assessment is a form of measurement that coupled with development becomes a most powerful learning tool. Line officers as well as all department members will benefit from the adoption and use of 360-degree assessments. By obtaining input from one's

boss, peers, and employees a complete picture of developmental needs and misguided personal ideas can be exposed, learned from, and developed correctly.

Communication

Open lines of communication and a system that encourages shared information and learning needs to be created and made consistent. Currently the department has its normal compliment of meetings at various levels, none of which have been as effective in learning as the few town-hall style meetings held this year. The difference was that it was made clear that openness was required to make these meetings successful. It is recommended that regular town-hall meetings be set for determining organizational reality and to keep the initiative in the front of all involved. Open communication and transparency involves the opening of literal doors. All meetings need to be open to anyone who wishes to attend. Minutes should be available immediately for all meetings. No secrets, only assertive communication to create the learning necessary for personal accountability will create a better sense of reality to create the tension required for true change and true to develop.

Accountability

No blame is adopted as the mantra of the department. The buck stops here. I will make it better. What can I do with what we have to make this work. Blame must be seen as what it is, a cop-out. Line officers as well as all department members need to be expected to take responsibility for reaching goals. No excuses, just innovation, creativity, and teamwork become normal operating procedures.

Empowerment

Personal accountability is enhanced with responsibility. The ultimate trust builder is to allow someone to make an important decision. Staff officers of SCFD need to allow more participation by giving more responsibility to the line officer ranks. Delegation is one-step in the process but empowerment is the act of developing partnerships to achieve more than is capable by ones self. Empowerment will allow the full benefits of personal accountability to be realized. A synergy will be formed that will allow for internal motivation and transformational leadership to be realized and sustained.

Support

While personal accountability does not depend on any outside source, it can certainly be supported by one. It is necessary to have support if an organizational climate of personal accountability is to be created. Staff officers will have to be brave, open, and willing to learn in order to release old methods of managing. They will have to become servant leaders. Their job will have to become one of teaching, stewardship, and design. The tangible support necessary will be in the form of time for learning and other programs. The intangible, yet possibly more important support, will come in the form of beliefs and actions that support a learning environment.

Mentoring

SCFD needs to implement a formal mentoring program of one-on-one meetings for all personnel. Specific to personal accountability for increased risk reduction at the line officer level the department needs mentoring from staff officers and senior officers to junior and new line officers. The program can be a recognition program for those selected to be a mentor. The feedback, follow up, support, direction, advice, and

encouragement will become a key learning and development tool for all line officers at a critical time in their careers while creating a system of continual organizational learning, improvement, accountability, and the opportunity to pass generational information from officer to officer.

Specific Recommendations

1. Create a shared vision, purpose, and values
2. Develop and support clear expectations for performance and behavior
3. Provide training for awareness, leadership, and accountability
4. Measure performance
5. Assess
6. Communicate more and better about crucial topics
7. Empower line officers
8. Support line officers with recognition, praise, and feedback
9. Create and support a mentoring program for new company officers

Departments that seek to implement a program for increasing personal accountability and reaping the rewards it presents will need to take the aforementioned nine steps. Specific to risk reduction, the act of training and measuring will be of key importance. Developing personal accountability for risk reduction is a benefit of developing personal accountability in general. If a department only seeks to improve this specific area, some general improvement would be realized by focusing on increasing skill and understanding, and measuring the outcomes of the results of the initiative while providing proper feedback to those involved. For deeper cultural changes that will

support any cultural and performance initiative departments will need to work diligently at all of these recommendations as outlined in this section.

SCFD has the opportunity to move in a positive direction utilizing personal accountability as a core element of leadership and better performance. The increases in risk reduction for the community will be realized as the skills associated with personal accountability are developed.

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